

Claims:

1. An electronic purchasing system comprising:

an applications content configuration module automatically processing electronic purchase requisitions over multiple back-end resource servers

5 comprising a plurality of catalogs containing descriptions of goods and services pertinent to a procurement environment;

a database storing data descriptors describing items contained in said catalogs, and for storing data object and attributes pertinent to said electronic purchase requisitions; and

10 a line item approving system, responsive to receiving a particular purchase requisition associated with a particular purchasing requisition, for processing approval of items specified in said particular purchasing requisition on a line-by-line basis.

15 2. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 1, further comprising a process manager system for generating an approval graph of identified approvers of line items in said particular purchasing requisition.

20 3. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 2, further comprising an automatic notification service for automatically detecting a line item approval in said particular purchase requisition and notifying approvers in said approval matrix.

4. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 3, wherein said automatic notification service is an electronic mail service.

25 5. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 1, wherein said line item approving system comprises an approval matrix for associating an identified

approver with each line item and conditions related to approval authority in said particular purchase requisition.

6. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 1, wherein said line item

5 approving system comprises a workflow module for coordinating said approval process between approvers identified for said particular purchase requisition.

7. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 6, wherein said line item

10 approving system further comprises a workflow case module for storing a plurality of workflow tasks defining a unit of work for each identified approver in said particular purchase requisition.

8. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 7, wherein said workflow tasks

15 further define operations that each of said identified approvers perform in relation to said particular purchasing requisition.

9. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 8, wherein said operations comprise approving a particular line item in said particular purchasing requisition.

20 10. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 9, wherein said operations

further comprise declining said particular line item in said particular purchasing requisition.

25 11. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 10, wherein said operations

further comprise reassigning approval of said particular line item in said particular purchase requisition.

12. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 11, wherein said operations further comprises delegating approval of said particular line item in said particular purchase requisition.

5 13. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 2, wherein said process manager system comprises a workflow control module for monitoring and tracking approvals by identified approvers specified in a purchase requisition.

10 14. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 13, wherein said process manager system further comprises an approval graph generator for generating a matrix of identified approvers for purchase requisitions submitted to the electronic purchase system.

15 15. An electronic purchasing approval system, comprising:
a line item approval module, in response to receiving a particular purchase requisition associated with a particular purchasing request, for processing approval of items specified in said particular purchasing requisition on a line-by-line item basis; and
a process manager for managing the approval process in said line item
20 approval module.

25 16. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 15, wherein said process manager comprises a graph generator for generating an approval graph of identified approvers of line items in said particular purchasing requisition.

17. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 16, wherein said process manager further comprises an automatic notification service for automatically detecting a line item approval in said particular purchasing requisition and notifying approvers in said approval matrix.

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18. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 17, wherein said notification service is an electronic mail service.

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19. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 18, wherein said line item approval module comprises an approval matrix for associating an identified approver with each line item and conditions related to said approver's approval authority in said particular purchasing requisition.

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20. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 19, wherein said line item approval module comprises a workflow module for coordinating said approval process between approvers identified for said particular purchasing requisition.

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21. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 20, wherein said line item approval module further comprise a workflow case module for storing a plurality of workflow tasks defining a unit of work for each identified approver in said particular purchasing requisition.

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22. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 21, wherein said workflow tasks further define operations that each of said identified approvers may perform in relation to said particular purchasing requisition.

23. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 22, wherein said operations further comprise declining said particular line item in said particular purchasing requisition.

24. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 23, wherein said operations further comprise reassigning approval of said particular line item in said particular purchasing requisition.

25. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 24, wherein said operations further comprise delegating approval of said particular line item in said particular purchasing requisition.

26. The electronic purchasing approval system of Claim 25, wherein said process manager comprises a workflow control module for monitoring and tracking approvals by identified approvers specified in a purchasing requisition.

27. The electronic purchasing system of Claim 26, wherein said process manager system further comprise an approval graph generator for generating a matrix of identified approvers for purchase requisitions submitted to the electronic purchasing system.

28. A line item approval method in an electronic purchasing system, comprising:
receiving a purchase request cataloged in a plurality of documents by said electronic purchasing network, said purchasing request comprising goods, services and supplier information defining purchasing parameters specific and unique to a particular purchasing professional;

generating an approval matrix defining a list of a plurality of approvers responsible for approving line items in said purchase request, wherein each line item may be associated with a respective approver;

5 distributing said purchase request to said plurality of approvers to approve said line items in said purchase request associated with each of said identified approvers, wherein each approver approves only their associated line items; and

10 generating a purchase order in response to said purchase request, said purchase order being generated based on line items approved by said plurality of approvers.

29. The method of Claim 28, wherein approval of said purchase request comprises a line item by line item approval process by said plurality of approvers.

15 30. The method of Claim 29, wherein said purchase order is generated irrespective of a non-approval of a line item in said purchase request by one of said plurality of identified approvers.

20 31. The method of Claim 30, wherein said line item by line item approval comprises providing a requisition in-box for notifying each of said approvers when a line item in said purchase request requires their approval.

25 32. The method of Claim 28, wherein said approval matrix provides a list of approval conditions associated with each one of said plurality of approvers.